



Highlights of [GAO-03-921](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

On September 14, 2001, President Bush proclaimed that a national emergency existed by reason of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Under section 12302 of title 10, United States Code, the President is allowed to call up to 1 million National Guard and Reserve members to active duty for up to 2 years. GAO was asked to review issues related to the call-up of reservists following September 11, 2001. GAO examined (1) whether the Department of Defense (DOD) followed existing operation plans when mobilizing forces, (2) the extent to which responsible officials had visibility over the mobilization process, and (3) approaches the services have taken to provide predictability to reservists. GAO also determined the extent to which the Ready Reserve forces, which make up over 98 percent of nonretired reservists, were available.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD improve mobilization planning, increase visibility over the readiness of small units, provide for the seamless transfer of reservists' data, update mobilization guidance, improve predictability for Army units, increase access to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR), and update IRR policies. DOD generally concurred with the recommendations in this report.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-921.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Derek B. Stewart at (202) 512-5559 or stewartd@gao.gov.

MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces

What GAO Found

About 300,000 of the 1.2 million National Guard and Reserve personnel have been called to active duty since September 11, 2001. They fought on the front lines in Iraq; tracked terrorists throughout Asia and Africa; maintained the peace in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and now Iraq; and participated in a wide range of domestic missions. However, DOD's process to mobilize reservists after September 11 had to be modified and contained numerous inefficiencies. Existing operation plans did not fully address the mobilization requirements needed to deal with the terrorist attacks or uncertain overseas requirements. For example, no previous requirements called for the extended use of National Guard and Reserve members to fly combat air patrols over the nation's capital and major cities. Because DOD could not rely on existing operation plans to guide its mobilizations, it used a modified process that relied on additional management oversight and multiple layers of coordination, which resulted in a process that was slower and less efficient than the traditional process. Under the modified process, the Secretary of Defense signed 246 deployment orders to mobilize over 280,000 reservists compared to the less than 10 deployment orders needed to mobilize over 220,000 reservists during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

DOD did not have visibility over the entire mobilization process primarily because it lacked adequate systems for tracking personnel and other resources. DOD's primary automated readiness reporting system could not adequately track the personnel and other resources within the small units that were frequently needed. Also, visibility was lost because some services' active and reserve systems for tracking personnel were incompatible, resulting in ad hoc coordination between active and reserve officials. Both groups often resorted to tracking mobilizations with computer spreadsheets. In addition, some reservists were deployed beyond dates specified in their orders or stayed on alert for more than a year and never mobilized because officials lost visibility.

The services have used two primary approaches—predictable operating cycles and advance notification—to provide time for units and personnel to prepare for mobilizations. All the services provide predictability to portions of their forces through some type of standard operating cycle, but only the Air Force has a standard operating cycle that brings predictability to both its active and reserve forces. The Army prioritizes its units, and lower-priority units generally need extra training and preparation time before deploying. Yet, since September 11, a number of lower-priority units have been mobilized with relatively little advance notice. Despite the large number of lower-priority units within the Army Guard and Reserve, the Army does not have a standard operating cycle to provide predictability to its reserves. Without such a concept, the Army's opportunities to provide extra training and preparation time to its reserve forces are limited.

Mobilizations were hampered because one-quarter of the Ready Reserve was not readily available for mobilization. Over 70,000 reservists could not be mobilized because they had not completed their training requirements, and the services lacked information needed to fully use the 300,000 pretrained IRR members.